



TRUE SONS OF FREEDOM

A Traveling Exhibition Available from the Library of Virginia

Content: To commemorate World War I, *True Sons of Freedom* uses photographs of African American soldiers from Virginia who fought overseas to defend freedoms they were denied at home. African Americans from all parts of the commonwealth served in the army and navy during World War I. The soldiers highlighted in *True Sons of Freedom* came from locations across Virginia and most worked as farmers or laborers before the conflict.

Reflecting the pride and determination of African American World War I servicemen, the images were submitted by these veterans with their responses to military service questionnaires created by the Virginia War History Commission as part of an effort to capture the scope of Virginians' participation in the Great War. The series of questions about the veterans' experiences provides invaluable genealogical information about the soldiers, their families, and their service records.

World War I recruitment efforts aimed at African Americans brought new soldiers into the armed services, providing them with opportunities to travel, to work, and, in many cases for the first time, to face cameras—all outside the restrictions of the Jim Crow South. These pocket-size portraits, made outdoors or in makeshift studios, became mementos for families and sweethearts. More importantly, these photographs challenge the crude and demoralizing cultural products of an era that often reduced African Americans to stereotypes and denied them full participation as citizens of the United States. They pose in uniform, some in casual stances, others with a rifle to show their combat readiness. Here were African Americans presented as they wanted themselves seen.

Exhibition Availability: The FREE exhibition is available for a twelve-week (12) loan period, inclusive of shipping, beginning June 2018. The Library of Virginia handles all shipping logistics.

Space Requirements: The exhibition requires a minimum of the equivalent of 100 running feet of wall in a room that has 24/7 HVAC and is free of natural daylight or has filtered windows. Each framed photograph measures 24"high x 16"wide. Interpretive materials include one title panel and two text panels each measuring 24"high x 16"wide, twenty-four (24) panels each measuring 17"high x 11"wide. All frames will be equipped for hanging and all text panels will come with 3M Command strips for installation.

Insurance: For insurance purposes, the value of the exhibition is \$15,000.

Support Materials: 200 postcards, press release with link to publicity images

Contact: Barbara C. Batson, Exhibitions Coordinator, The Library of Virginia, Barbara.batson@lva.virginia.gov, 804-692-3518

Exhibition Specifications

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| Contents | Twenty-four (24) framed photographs, title panel, text panels |
| Supplemental | Promotional resources |
| Space | 100 running fee |
| Shipping | LVA handles all shipping logistics |
| Contact | Barbara C. Batson, barbara.batson@lva.virginia.gov , 804-692-3518 |
| Tour begins | June 2018 |



Herbert Lee Byrd, Accomack County.



William A. Manson, Brunswick County.



Charles R. Peery, Giles County.